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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: IMMIGRATION: EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN INTERIOR
MINISTERS LAUNCH NEW ACTION PLAN
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REFTELS: A) ROME 4737 B) ROME 3244

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2.(U) INTERIOR MINISTERS FOR THE "ADRIATIC-IONIAN" REGION ANNOUNCED A NEW ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT CLANDESTINE IMMIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT THE END OF A ONE-DAY MINISTERIAL IN LECCE NOVEMBER 13. THE ACTION PLAN WAS SIGNED BY MINISTERS FROM ITALY, ALBANIA, BOSNIA, CROATIA, THE FRY, GREECE AND SLOVENIA; THE MACEDONIAN AND BULGARIAN MINISTERS DID NOT SIGN BUT ASSOCIATED THEMSELVES WITH THE PLAN'S INITIATIVES. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE COMMISSION AND EU PRESIDENT DENMARK ALSO ATTENDED. TURKEY WAS, IN THE VIEW OF THE ITALIAN MEDIA, "NOTICEABLY ABSENT," BUT INTERIOR VICE-MINISTER MANTOVANO COUNTERED BY POINTING TO THE RECENT TURKISH ELECTIONS AND ABSENCE OF A NEW CABINET. MANTOVANO UNDERScoreD THE GOOD COOPERATION ITALY HAD ENJOYED FROM TURKEY ON CLANDESTINE IMMIGRATION UP TO DATE.

3.(U) UNDER THE "ALERT AND REACTION" PLAN, THE SIGNATORY COUNTRIES COMMITTED TO:

- CONDUCT JOINT BORDER AND MARITIME INTERDICTION PATROLS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESPECTIVE NATIONAL LEGISLATION), CONCENTRATING ON AREAS OF HIGH TRAFFIC;
- EXCHANGE BORDER POLICE AND OTHER PERSONNEL AT PORTS AND AIRPORTS HEAVILY USED BY CLANDESTINE IMMIGRANTS AS EMBARKATION OR TRANSIT POINTS;
- ESTABLISH PROCEDURES TO INTERDICT AND RETURN VESSELS ENGAGED IN TRAFFICKING AND CLANDESTINE IMMIGRATION TO THEIR

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PORTS OF ORIGIN

- ADOPT MEASURES TO ACCELERATE IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES FOR UNDOCUMENTED ILLEGALS IN ORDER TO SPEED THEIR REPATRIATION FROM DESTINATION COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH THE PROCEDURES TO BE EMPLOYED WERE NOT SPECIFIED, ITALIAN INTERIOR MINISTER PISANU SUGGESTED FINGERPRINTING EXPELLEES, A PROPOSAL THAT HAS GENERATED STRONG OPPOSITION FROM THE ITALIAN LEFT.
- PERIODICALLY ASSESS, VIA THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN INITIATIVE'S ROTATING PRESIDENCY, SIGNATORIES COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTING THE VARIOUS MEASURES.

4.(U) THE MINISTERS ALSO PLEDGED TO PROMPTLY IMPLEMENT EXISTING ANTI-TRAFFICKING AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION ACCORDS. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE MINISTERS AGREED TO IMPLEMENT EXISTING READMISSION ACCORDS (UNDER WHICH EMBARKATION COUNTRIES AGREE TO TAKE BACK SOME OR ALL OF THEIR NATIONALS EXPELLED FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION) AND, WHERE CURRENTLY LACKING, TO NEGOTIATE NEW MEASURES WITH OTHER SIGNATORIES AND "NEIGHBORING THIRD COUNTRIES." PISANU POINTED TO ITALY'S ACCORD WITH ALBANIA AS A MODEL, NOTING THAT IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS "NOT ONE DINGHY, NOT ONE PROSTITUTE" HAD ARRIVED IN ITALY FROM ALBANIA. INSTEAD, ITALY NOW RECEIVES ONLY WORKERS OR BUSINESSMEN VISITING FOR LEGITIMATE TRADE.

5.(U) THE ACTION PLAN MARKED A NEW AND MORE ADVANCED PHASE OF COOPERATION AMONG THE COUNTRIES IN THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN AREA, PISANU ASSERTED, ONE THAT SHOULD SWIFTLY IMPROVE INTERDICTION OF CLANDESTINES EN ROUTE AND, FOR THOSE SUBSEQUENTLY CAUGHT IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES, SPEED

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REPATRIATION.

6.(U) NOT EVERYONE AGREED WITH PISANU'S ASSESSMENT. A MODEST GROUP OF PROTESTORS (ESTIMATES RANGED FROM 3,000 AND 5,000) VIED FOR MEDIA ATTENTION BY ORGANIZING A 'COUNTERSUMMIT' TO PROTEST THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT'S IMMIGRATION POLICY, CONCENTRATING ON THE RECENTLY-ENACTED BOSSI-FINI LEGISLATION (REF A). "UNDER BOSSI-FINI, WE ARE ALL CLANDESTINE IMMIGRANTS," ASSERTED ONE BANNER DISPLAYED OUTSIDE THE MINISTERIAL VENUE.

7.(SBU) THE LECCE ACCORD EMPHASIZES THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT'S PREFERRED TOOLS FOR COMBATTING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: TOUGH INTERDICTION AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES COUPLED WITH A LEGAL IMMIGRATION SYSTEM CENTERED PRIMARILY ON EMPLOYMENT. A JUST-CONCLUDED "REGULARIZATION," UNDER WHICH EMPLOYERS WERE ENCOURAGED TO REGISTER THEIR ILLEGAL WORKERS, MOVED SOME 700,000 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (OR SOME FORTY-SIX PERCENT OF THE ESTIMATED 1.5 MILLION ILLEGALS IN ITALY) INTO LEGAL STATUS. ITALY HAS ALREADY CONCLUDED OVER TWENTY READMISSION ACCORDS (INCLUDING WITH VIRTUALLY EVERY COUNTRY REPRESENTED IN LECCE), OFFERING THESE COUNTRIES HIGHER QUOTAS FOR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS AS A REWARD FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN PREVENTING CLANDESTINE DEPARTURES AND IN ACCEPTING REPATRIATED ILLEGALS. LABOR MINISTRY CONTACTS TELL US THEY ARE DISCUSSING A SIMILAR ACCORD WITH THE PHILIPPINES, SOURCE OF MANY DOMESTIC CARE-GIVERS. THEY ARE

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CA-01	CEA-01	CIAE-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	DODE-00	ITCE-00	ANHR-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00
	EB-00	EXME-00	E-00	UTED-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00
	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	VO-03	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/016W	

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ALSO PLANNING TALKS WITH BUCHAREST TO TRY TO ADDRESS THE STEADY INFLUX OF ORPHANED ROMANIAN CHILDREN.

8.(SBU) COMMENT: THE ACCORD SHOULD HELP THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT FRAME ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AS ONE OF THE CENTERPIECES OF ITS EU PRESIDENCY NEXT YEAR. ITALIAN OFFICIALS HAVE LONG LAMENTED WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS THE RELUCTANCE OF NORTHERN MEMBER-STATES (FAR REMOVED, IN THEIR EYES, FROM THE IMMEDIACY AND MAGNITUDE OF THE PHENOMENON) TO SANCTION TOUGHER ENFORCEMENT AGAINST CLANDESTINE IMMIGRATION. THIS ACCORD LAYS OUT, IN PLAIN VIEW FOR THE WIDER EU TO SEE, THE ITALIANS' PREFERRED TOOLS FOR ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM. WE EXPECT TO SEE THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT REACHING INTO THE SAME TOOLBOX NEXT YEAR AS IT ATTEMPTS TO PUSH THE EU TO ADOPT A TOUGHER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE 'SOLUTION' TO THE PHENOMENON.

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